

A FILE OF INFANTRYMEN.

"For Three Years, or During the War"—At Home in a Shelter Tent, and Abroad with "Three Days' Rations and Forty Rounds of Ammunition."

By JOHN McLEROY.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

In this war-story, the hero, Walter Armistage, is a youth who is employed in the composing room of an afternoon daily newspaper in Chicago. The country is on the eve of civil war. News of the bombardment of Fort Sumter creates much excitement. A fight between David Bronson, a Unionist, and Dick Morgan, a Secessionist, both compositors, results in a victory for the former. Walter, whose ideas of the situation are yet unformed, has a discussion with Bronson, who sets forth loyally the conditions that confront the Government. Walter goes down town with Bronson to watch the bulletins at the newspaper offices. Secessionist sympathizers, denizens of Chicago's slums, air their opinions of loyal citizens, and express desires that some one would afford an opportunity for an encounter. They are suddenly confronted by one whose voice and manner as he holds them "good evening" is disquieting, to say the least.

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CHAPTER V—(continued).

The worthy sextet turned and surveyed the new-comer.

It was first apparent to them that he was an Irishman.

Next that he was six feet high, if an inch, and as quick and strong as he was tall.

Then that he moved his hands in a way that showed much skill in the art of "putting his daddies up," as Inky would express it.

Lastly, that he had just whisky enough in him to make him yearn for a good sharp scrimmage as the one thing to complete his happiness.

"Peery" and his crowd were excellent judges of human nature—in some respects. They had a full share of their class's instinct as to whom it is safe to become involved in a row with, and whom not. They needed no telling that this person was emphatically one of the latter class.

"Good ayvning, jintlemen," he repeated, with a steady, uncertain smile in his wide-open blue eyes, while one mammoth hand toyed with his stubby red mustache and the other twirled a switch cane, that looked as much out of place in his stalwart grasp as a straw in an elephant's trunk. "Since ye don't know me, Oi must introduce meself. Me name it is Pat-r-ick O'Nale. The O'Nales, as ye know, are the first family in Oireland, and Oi'm was uv thim. Me father is second cousin of the O'Nale himself. Oi've belonged for the last tin years to Company Say (C), Sixth United States Infantry; ye've certainly heard of it, because the Sixth Infantry is the finest regiment in the United States Army. She's got thirtane honors on her flag, and ivery man uv thim rale ginooine honors, too; and Company Say is the best Company in the Regiment, and Oi'm First Juty Sargent of the Company. My toime's just out, an' Oi'm takin' a little turn around to say the soights, like, afore Oi ray-inist."

Concluding these personal reminiscences, the switch-cane was shifted into the left hand, and the right took up the hopeless task of persuading the red brick on his upper lip to assume the waxed nativeness of a Napoleonic mustache. The blue eyes fell on "Peery" with a smile of aggravating banter.

"O've just bin hearing the awful news from Charleston. Oi've several friends in Fort Sumter. Me mither's sister's own child, Phelim Rafferty, is a Sargent in Maj. Anderson's artillery company. Oi'm very much afraid he's hurt. Don't you think this is a scoundrelly pace of biznis, this foiring on the United States flag?"

It was "Peery" who was asked this question, and who must answer it categorically and instantly. Not a detail of the situation escaped him. The ex-Sergeant was just four feet away—the best striking distance for his long arm; his hand still toyed with his mustache, but in position to deliver a blow with lightning swiftness; not one of the crowd was in place to make a diversion in the rear before "Peery" would be knocked into the deep mud of the middle of the street. But his position as leader demanded that he make one effort to bluster out of the affair, and he began savagely:

"Well, I—"

A grin of exultation brightened up Mr. O'Nale's face, his fingers abandoned the mustache and clenched into a fist which started to draw back.

It was too much. "Peery" weakened. As he told some friends afterward, he was no blank fool, to go into a game where he had no show, and so his voice and countenance dropped, and he said:

"Yes; I think it a very bad thing."

"But don't ye think it a—"

"name thing?" said the merciless O'Nale, still retaining his fist in its threatening attitude.

"Peery" choked down a rising in his throat, and said with the calmness of a crushed spirit:

"Yes, I must say it is."

"Ye not very hearty in yer remarks," said O'Nale, disappointed at having no excuse for striking a man who, to use his own words, "stud so fair and illigant for a knockdown." But O'Nale supposed Oi must take yer word for it."

"This jintlemen here," he continued, fixing his blue eyes hopefully on "Mississippi."

"This jintlemen here I know agree with me intirely that they are a set uv beggars and vagabonds who are doing this dirty work at Charleston."

"Mississippi" was in as easy range of that dreadful fist as "Peery." He stammered out:

"W-e-l-l—yes—perhaps—O—certainly."

"Ye haven't a remarkably fair delivery, Oi must say," said Mr. O'Nale; "but Oi'm afraid Oi'll hev take your word."

"How's it with you, me frind?" asked he, tapping "Curly" on the shoulder with the switch cane; "don't you think those tharves uv the wurrld ought to be hung, and wouldn't ye like to help do it?"

"Curly" was of no better stuff than the rest, and he yielded as they had.

As his chances for getting a fight out of the crowd diminished, Mr. O'Nale's sautivity became impaired somewhat, but he was still winningly polite as his switch cane called the attention of the fourth to the question:

"Oi trust that you wholly agray with what your friends hev said?"

No. 4 had less hesitation than the others in saying that he did, and No. 5 assented without being asked.

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was not lessened by the fact that he

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every face was drawn. To every lip the

questions leaped unbidden:

"What is the latest news?"

"Do you suppose the fort has surren-

dered?"

"What must come of this? It means

a long and terrible war, doesn't it?"

"There is no way out of it; we must

fight; we must reduce these men to obedi-

ence. Isn't this so?"

No one went to his work as of wont,

with earnest face and eager step, as if

longing to renew the labor of gaining

money, or honor, or advancement.

Rather he went as if these motives had

lost most of their value; as if an insu-

lator had been interposed to cut off

their electricity. They were the diversions

of yesterday, paling before the serious

business of to-day.

At any hour that might happen which

would make men wonder why they had

ever cared for selfish profit.

The same atmosphere of excitement

subdued into sadness and apprehension

permeated the composing room of the

News office. One by one the men came

in, lunch pail in hand, listlessly nodded

good morning to each other, walked over

to the other side of the room, deposited

their lunches, hung up their coats and

walked slowly away to his case,

reading his copy intently as he went.

Three minutes after, the "Father of

the Chapel" called "Time!" every

man was at his case, deeply absorbed in

his work.

Promptly at his usual hour of 8

o'clock Old Jo appeared, came in one

hand and lunch basket in the other—

and attired in his customary working-

day garments, but otherwise very differ-

ent from the hearty, hilarious old fellow,

who brought kindness in with him,

like a fresh breeze through a street door.

Now had the ready left his lip, and

the cheery light his eye. It seemed as

if his very body was so shrunken that

his clothes flapped about him. He had

encountered a bit of bad news that he

could not roll off his mind through the

waste-weir of an exclamation.

After bestowing his lunch and his

street clothes in their usual place, he

wandered vacantly around the room for

awhile, striving in vain to interest him-

self as usual in the condition of the

type on the standing galleys, the "pi"

made by clumsy "subs" and hidden

stealthily away, the arrangement of the

advertisements, and the elimination of

those that were "dead" from the

"forms."

At length he found his way over to

Bronson's case, and began opening up

his heart to him in a tone so low as to

not disturb anyone else:

"Dave, this is just awful! I do be-

lieve that it is the worst thing that has

happened since Christ was crucified. It

takes all the light out of my life. As

'Macbeth' says:

"Had I but died an hour before this chance,

I had died a blessed thing."

"Well, I have strong hopes that

when they see the resolute front the

North presents the Southern people will

feel inclined to listen to the conservatives

and reject the counsels of the Fire-

Eaters. It may not be too late yet for

them to agree to the Crittenden Com-

promise."

"O, they never will; they never

will!" said the old foreman, vehemently.

"The Fire-Eaters have all the women,

the preachers and the young men of the

South with them. They have talked to

the young men until they have got them

afire with the idea of winning military

glory by whipping the North. There

are mighty few young men in the South

but what believe they are superior in

strength and courage to the young men

in the North and they are anxious to

show their young women that they are,

and the young women are even more